

# SALVATION IN SYMBOLS & SIGNS

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Corresponds to Program 26

## THE 144,000, PART 1 STUDY GUIDE

### THE SEALED OF EARTH

#### Read Revelation 7

Revelation 7 is an interlude—or interruption of sorts—to the seven seals. The whole chapter is dedicated to answering the question that hangs suspended in the last verse of chapter 6: “Who shall be able to stand?” Revelation 6:17. The interpretation of Revelation 7 is entwined in the sixth seal.

The sixth seal details supernatural events linked to the second coming of Christ. At the approach of the Son of Man, the earth, sky, land and sea are in tremendous commotion. Stars fall. Entire mountains and islands are moved out of place (see Matthew 24:29-30; Mark 13:24-26; Revelation 6:14). So awesome and terrifying is the sight that the “great men” and “mighty men” call for the “mountains and rocks” to fall on them and hide them from the face of God who sits on the “throne” and from the “Lamb” (Revelation 6:15-16).

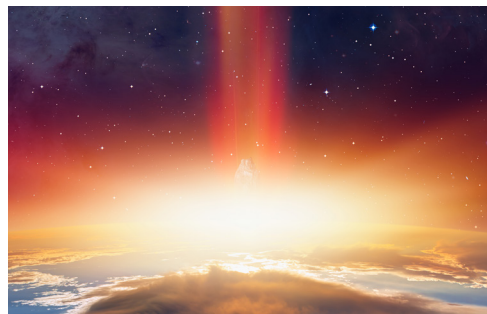
In this context, a question explodes forth from the lips of all who gaze upon the scene—“Who shall be able to stand?” Revelation 6:17.

The answer follows in chapter 7—first by the words of the angel in Revelation 7:3: “the servants of our God;” and then in John’s statements in Revelation 7:9, “behold, a great *multitude standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*” (Emphasis mine).

Notice the context of the question, “Who shall be able to stand”—before “the *throne*” and “the *Lamb*?” (Revelation 6:16-17). (emphasis mine). Revelation chapter 7 gives the answer to this very question:

“A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Revelation 7:9. Notice the link between the question in chapter 6 and the answer in chapter 7, “stand” before the “throne” and before the “Lamb.”

The Bible itself unlocks the mystery of John’s vision. It speaks of two groups of people who shall be able to stand before “Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb,” at Christ’s Second Coming.



At the approach of the Son of Man, the earth, sky, land and sea are in tremendous commotion.

The first group is made up of believers who are “alive” when He returns. The second group consists of believers who “sleep in Jesus” and are resurrected at His second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 51-52).

### LITERAL OR SYMBOLIC?

#### Hear and See

Repeatedly in Revelation we find a sequence in which John *first hears* what he *then sees*. In Revelation chapter 1 John “heard” a “great voice” like a “trumpet” and then he “saw” the “Son of man” (Revelation 1:10, 13). In Revelation chapter 9 John “heard the number” of “horsemen” and then “saw the horses

in the vision” (Revelation 9:16-17). Following this pattern, it is significant to note that John first “heard” the number of those who were sealed, and then he “beheld” a “great multitude which no man could number” (Revelation 7:4, 9). In each of these examples what John first hears *is the same* as what he then sees.

Another important insight to consider is that the sealed are from the “twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (Revelation 7:4). Since the Old Testament church was designated as the

### KEY SCRIPTURES

**Rev. 7:3** ANGEL PLACES SEAL ON FOREHEADS

**Rev. 7:13-14** GOD’S PEOPLE CLOTHED IN WHITE

**Rev. 7:4-8** GOD’S PEOPLE SEALED DURING LAST DAYS

**Galatians 6:16** REDEEMED CALLED “THE ISRAEL OF GOD”

twelve “tribes of Israel” (Genesis 49:28; Acts 26:7), and since the New Testament church is also described as the “twelve tribes scattered abroad” and the “Israel of God” (James 1:1; Galatians 3:29; 6:15-16; Matthew 21:43; Romans 2:28-29; 1 Peter 2:9-10), this would therefore show that the 144,000, which are from tribes of Israel, symbolize all the saved both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

The Bible teaches that “sealing of the servants of God” (Revelation 7:3) includes all of those who have died in the faith of Christ as well as those who are alive at His coming (Romans 4:11; Hebrews 11:13; Ephesians 1:10-14, 4:30). Every person who stands before the throne in heaven will have the seal of God’s name in their foreheads (Revelation 7:3). This seal of God is equivalent to having our names written and retained in the Lamb’s book of life (Psalm 69:28; Philippians 4:3; Luke 10:20; Revelation 3:5, 13:8).

The great multitude is said to have come out of “great tribulation” (Revelation 7:14). God’s faithful servants in all generations, including the last generation, will have gone through great tribulation (Matthew 24:21, 29; Acts 14:22; Deuteronomy 4:30-31; John 16:33; Revelation 2:10; Daniel 12:1).

The 144,000 are called the “servants of our God.” The “great multitude” is pictured as those who “serve Him day and night in His temple” (Revelation 7:9, 15). In a heavenly scene following the second coming when “all” the “servants” of God are called to praise Him, John hears “the voice of a great multitude” which are called the Lamb’s “wife” and I was beckoned to the marriage supper (Revelation 19:5-9). There is no mention of the 144,000 as a select and different group. Based on these thoughts, it can be seen at the number 144,000 is used symbolically to represent “the Israel of God” the redeemed (Galatians 6:16; Revelation 5:9).

It is important to recognize that 144,000 as an exact number, which, if taken as a literal number, would cause some problems:

1. Contrary to His character, God would have to cut off any person that exceeds a literal count of 144,000 from being sealed, written in the Book of Life, and eternally saved. Yet the Bible clearly states that God is long-suffering, not wanting any to perish (2 Peter 3:9).
2. God would also be limited to sealing only 12,000 people from each literal tribe.
3. Biblically, the numbering of people only includes males (Luke 9:14; Matthew 14:21). Revelation 7:4-8 cannot be taken literally as its interpretation would still have to be symbolic to women and children.
4. Reflect back to when John was shown the “bride,” the “Lamb’s wife,” and the “great city, the holy Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:9-10). This city, the “Lamb’s wife,” symbolizes God’s faithful of both the Old and New Testaments. And as such, we see the 144,000 as this same symbolic representation of the “bride” of Christ, the “Israel” of God, the redeemed of all ages. While we know this city is a literal city, it also symbolizes God’s people. It is called “the bride” of Christ (God’s people are so named in both the Old Testament and the New—Revelation 19:7-8; Ephesians 5:23-32; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Jeremiah 3:14).
5. Entrance to the city requires each of the redeemed to walk through one of the gates named after the twelve tribes of Israel. In this way every one of the redeemed is connected to one of the twelve tribes who are symbolized as sealed with God’s name. ★

